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Diana T Fritz 03/20/2007 11:31:06 AM From DB/Inbox: Search Results

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Text:

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SIPDIS  
TELEGRAM

December 17, 2003

To: No Action Addressee  
Action: Unknown  
From: AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI (ABU DHABI 5343 - ROUTINE)  
TAGS: PREL, ASEC, KPAO  
Captions: None  
Subject: AT YOUTH WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP, CROWDS TURN OUT TO BOO  
U.S. TEAM  
Ref: None

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UNCLAS ABU DHABI 05343

SIPDIS  
CXABU:  
ACTION: AMB  
INFO: CONS PAO DCM RSO  
Laser1:  
INFO: CONS PAO

DISSEMINATION: AMB  
CHARGE: PROG

APPROVED: AMB:MWAHBA  
DRAFTED: CON:TPONCE  
CLEARED: DCM:RALBRIGHT

VZCZCADI785  
RR RUEHDI RUEHBU RUEHC RUEHXX ALSAC  
DE RUEHAD #5343 3511309  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
R 171309Z DEC 03  
FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI  
TO RUEHDI/AMCONSUL DUBAI 3591  
RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 0006  
RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 2745  
INFO RUEHXX/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE  
ALSAC/ALL SOUTH ASIA COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS ABU DHABI 005343

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/NGA; NEA/ENA; NEA/ARP; NEA/PPD; NEA/FO; CA;  
DS/IP/NEA

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [KPAO](#) [TC](#)  
SUBJECT: AT YOUTH WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP, CROWDS TURN OUT TO BOO  
U.S. TEAM

11. SUMMARY AND COMMENT: AFTER BATTLING THEIR WAY THROUGH THE  
FIRST ROUND OF THE FEDERATION DE INTERNATIONALE DE FOOTBALL  
ASSOCIATION'S (FIFA) WORLD YOUTH CHAMPIONSHIP (UNDER 20), THE  
US TEAM LOST A HEARTBREAKER IN ABU DHABI TO REIGNING CHAMPION  
ARGENTINA, 2 TO 1 IN SUDDEN DEATH. THE STORY OF THE GAMES,  
HOWEVER, WAS NOT THE AMAZING PLAY OF THE US SIDE. WHILE  
SUPPORT FROM THE UAE GOVERNMENT AND FIFA ORGANIZING COMMITTEE  
WERE OUTSTANDING AS USUAL, CROWDS TURNED OUT TO JEER THE YOUNG  
AMERICAN TEAM DURING THEIR LAST GAME, INCLUDING BOOING THE US

NATIONAL ANTHEM. END SUMMARY AND COMMENT.

¶2. THE UAE GOVERNMENT AND THE UAE'S FIFA ORGANIZING COMMITTEE SUPPORTED THE US TEAM SUPERBLY THROUGHOUT THE GAMES. THIS SUPPORT INCLUDED LODGING THE US TEAM AT THE EXTRAVAGANT UAE OFFICERS CLUB, PROVIDING ADDITIONAL SECURITY FOR ALL US TEAM EVENTS, AND FACILITATING A SEPARATE, POLICE-CORDONED SECTION FOR AMERICANS AT THE US GAMES. THE TEAM ALSO APPRECIATED THE TDY DS AGENT THAT DIPLOMATIC SECURITY PROVIDED TO ENSURE THE TEAM'S PERSONAL SECURITY AT ALL TIMES. MOST SPECIAL TO THE TEAM, HOWEVER, WAS THE PRIVATE BUT LAVISH TURKEY DINNER THE OFFICERS CLUB PROVIDED PLAYERS AND COACHES ON THANKSGIVING.

¶3. THE FIFA WORLD YOUTH CHAMPIONSHIP GOT UNDERWAY IN THE UAE WITH A FESTIVE OPENING CEREMONY IN ABU DHABI ON NOVEMBER 27. THE UAE'S WEALTHY ELITE PURCHASED TICKETS FOR ALL GAMES AND GAVE THEM TO ALL WHO APPEARED, THUS ALLOWING ATTENDANCE BY LARGE NUMBERS OF EXPAT LABORERS, MANY OF WHOM COULD NOT AFFORD SIMILAR EVENTS. DESPITE A GROUP THAT INCLUDED GERMANY, PARAGUAY, AND SOUTH KOREA, THE US TEAM WON TWO OF ITS THREE FIRST-ROUND MATCHES IN ABU DHABI TO ADVANCE TO ROUND TWO. THESE FIRST-ROUND MATCHES WERE RELATIVELY QUIET, ATTENDED MOSTLY IN SMALL NUMBERS BY NATIONAL FANS OF THE COMPETING TEAMS.

¶4. HOWEVER, THIS CHANGED WHEN THE US TEAM PLAYED THE HEAVILY FAVORED ARGENTINE SQUAD IN ROUND TWO. IN THIS GAME, THE US TEAM PLAYED A DEFENSIVE MATCH HIGHLIGHTED BY A NUMBER OF ATTACKS TO THE OPPOSITE SIDE OF THE FIELD. AHEAD BY A SINGLE GOAL, THE US DEFENSE HELD THE ARGENTINES SCORELESS NEARLY THE ENTIRE GAME. HOWEVER, THE US SURRENDERED A GOAL IN THE FINAL SECONDS OF STOPPAGE TIME TO SET UP OVERTIME. FOLLOWING A DISPUTED CALL TO SET UP A PENALTY KICK, ARGENTINA SQUEAKED THE WINNING GOAL OFF THE FINGERTIPS OF THE DIVING US GOALKEEPER.

¶5. COMMENT: APPROXIMATELY 20,000 SOCCER FANS, A MIXTURE OF SOUTH ASIANS, ARABS, AND EMIRATIS, BOOED THE AMERICANS AT EVERY POSSIBLE OPPORTUNITY. AFTER DROWNING OUT THE U.S. NATIONAL ANTHEM WITH THEIR JEERS, THE FANS CHEERED EACH US MISFORTUNE ON THE FIELD. THIS OPEN PUBLIC REACTION DEMONSTRATES THAT TENSIONS AND ANTI-AMERICAN ATTITUDES STILL RUN HOT, EVEN IN THE RELATIVELY CALM UAE.

¶6. ONE BRIGHT SPOT IN THIS UNFRIENDLY CROWD WAS THE NUMBER OF IRAQIS WHO TURNED OUT FOR THE GAMES, SAT WITH AMERICANS, AND CHEERED THE US TEAM. SEVERAL IRAQIS BROUGHT ALONG US AND NEW IRAQI FLAGS TO THE US GAMES AGAINST ARGENTINA AND GERMANY. DURING THE GAME, THEY PROUDLY WAVED BOTH IN FRONT OF THE JEERING CROWDS. A PICTURE OF AN IRAQI FAMILY WAVING THEIR NEW FLAG NEXT TO AN AMERICAN ONE AT THE ARGENTINE GAME APPEARED IN THE UAE'S LOCAL ARABIC AND ENGLISH DAILIES ON DECEMBER 14. END COMMENT.

WAHBA